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PROGRAM CBS News

STATION WTOP Radio
CBS Network

DATE January 5, 1983 10:00 AM CITY Washington, DC

SUBJECT Cosmos 1402

JUDY MUELLER: One of the hundreds of objects orbiting the earth has reportedly malfunctioned.

CBS News has learned that a Soviet satellite could pose a radiation hazard to earth.

Bill Lynch reports from Washington.

BILL LYNCH: US intelligence sources say a Soviet spy satellite, powered by a small nuclear reactor could plunge back to earth later this month, spreading radioactive materials into the upper atmosphere, an ocean area, or on land.

Cosmos 1402, launched last August 30th is an orbiting radar station designed to scan the world's oceans. It is powered by a smaller nuclear reactor, fueled with a radioactive isotope. Five years ago a similar Soviet satellite crashed into northern Canada, spewing uranium 235 over a wooded area.

US intelligence reports say Cosmos 1402 could make an uncontrolled re-entry on or before January 23rd. Other sources say, however, that the Soviets may still be able to prevent such an accident.

The usual procedure is for these radar surveillance satellites to operate in low earth orbit for a few months and then be boosted into a safe higher orbit. Such a maneuver apparently failed on December 20th, creating a potential radioactive hazard.

Bill Lynch, CBS News, Washington.

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